The development of interdisciplinary thinking in the new postmodern education

Shu Nu Yang, Assistant Professor, Yu Da University, Taiwan

Abstract

As an educator, it is always interesting to learn and employ new and creative ways of thinking and methods in teaching. However, the application of these new ideas in our classrooms needs more examination for better ways of implementation. Since the postmodernist theory and approaches have been practiced in education in the past few decades, the criticisms stated by educators and scholars have led to an examination of its impact on teaching and learning in different fields. In this paper, I would like to bring forth the educational issues under the influence of post-modernist trends and, eventually, develop the new postmodern approach in higher education.

In this way, we offer other perspectives, taking into account interdisciplinary theory and principles, as a feasible alternative and prevailing idea in higher education. An interdisciplinary approach will be discussed as a way to solve the problems related to the negative effects of current postmodern issues in education. Contemporary single-disciplinary theories and approaches in education have evolved toward interdisciplinary thinking that integrates different perspectives and fields. These new multiple approaches can serve as the educational basis for reconstructing value of the humanities.

This proposition is considered as an issue when facing the critical situation in postmodern education in our society today. In addition, the interdisciplinary thinking will be employed, based on the multiple-perspectives from literature, philosophy, religion, science, and cultural studies. The integration of these related but distinct disciplines will elucidate programs and hopefully serve to inspire the basis for new postmodern education.

Keyword : postmodernism, interdisciplinary, education, teaching, plurality

Introduction

Many educators are facing controversial issues and situations since postmodernist theory was introduced to the field of education. Under such circumstances, the historical review would be necessary for re-examining this issue. Back in the era of the Enlightenment, which gave birth to modernism, many people's beliefs in the transcendental origins were lost, and replaced by placing reason at the center of all beliefs. Thus, the viewpoint of what the "I" sees in the moment was abandoned in favor of a view of the world which was seen as being instantly changeable, and was determined by the circulation of all forms of segmented knowledge.

As a result of this idea being adopted, the notion of the "I" was no longer conceptual but logical; and no longer consistent but fragmented. Furthermore, since in the modernist frame of reference the absolute truth cannot be found as the meaning of life, the lack of a spiritual center advances the primacy of the personal perspective which becomes the only true measure of "reality". The modernists thus suggested that each individual should seek to discover how their own point of view creates a framework for their individual perception of reality. For example, the theory of the "invisible hand of market" (Smith, 2012) can appear to create a miracle. It replaces the old order by emphasizing the idea that the motivation behind self-interest is intrinsically beneficial to society. An individual acts in his or her own self-interest, thereby opening the way to a diversity of interests and multiple references.[1] If she or he wishes to gain quick access to knowledge, the ascetic and procedural modes are useless and need to be replaced by the expanding and informative mode. This kind of suggestion, related to the belief that realities are "subject to change," can consequently become the clear focus of personal interest.

After modernism, postmodernism had a substantial impact on society, and some scholars' studies associate it with the diversification of multicultural studies in postmodern education, despite cultural differences. With the information flow across the borders of countries, people have developed a greater awareness of all humanity as members of our global village. Thus, "in the fragmenting cultural configurations of our multicultural societies, postmodern diversification of education arrangements is both good and inevitable."[2] (Green, 1997) Many postmodernists indicate that the diversification of the postmodern education can direct our students to explore their personal values with regard to multiple choices they are able to make. The hope that such an approach will encourage educators to consider and employ the various alternative approaches to prevent the bureaucratic standardization of curriculum stifling creativity.

Development of the interdisciplinary thinking and learning
Actually, as many scholars have pointed out, our global village actually can be divided into two different parts: one is subject to individualism and the other to authoritarianism. The first area is mostly located mainly in western countries and the East Asian areas, such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong where the societies generally accept the western modern socio-cultural lifestyles and systems., Here the central idea, postmodernism, postulates that a certain amount of what are called "realities" are in fact

---

[1] « Toutes les définitions du grand Sujet peuvent se trouver dans la modernité qui ne peut plus fonctionner que comme un espace ouvert à des références multiples, voire contradictoires, où les repères sont en constant déplacement. » Dany-Robert Dufour, *Education, religions, raison et marché*, Diversité,Ville-Ecole-Intégration, (2005), 142

[2] Andy Green, *Education, Globalization, and Nation State* (London : Macmillan, 1997), 22

socially-constructed and dynamic, and, thus, subject to change. The postmodernist approaches consider the ways in which social dynamics overall are socially constructed and used. In this way, the East Asian countries on the one hand make progress in every domain. But on the other hand, the way people perceive the world's "realities" is plural and relative. The postmodernist perspective claims that there is no absolute truth. In other words, the way of seeing depends on the interested parties are and on the nature of their interests. Such approaches to thinking have had a huge impact on modern life and society.

In the field of education, postmodernist considers that the classical school focuses on tradition and on universality, but postmodern approach focuses on the present and therefore on individual uniqueness. Especially, education focuses on desired learning motivation, so the successful value of knowledge shall be first constituted by our desire, personal needs and interests in learning in order to determine the efficiency of the curriculum. The education schema no longer represents the transmission of knowledge but the circulation of segmented knowledge and communication. In this condition, legitimate learning is not fulfilled by exteriority, by transcendental or inaccessible knowledge, but by limited segmented knowledge from individuals. This is the situation and challenge we face in the education today.[3]

Therefore, when considering the critical situation of today's postmodern education, it's necessary to re-examine and re-evaluate various theories which have been applied to student's way of learning. One example is the relative theory where the dual relationship between students and teachers focuses on the student's ideas and perspective. Students' autonomy are totally respected and the relationship between teachers and students is conceived as being one of equals, with an emphasis on students' personal responses and judgments, instead of the lessons guided by their teachers. Students may make pedagogical rules and evaluate their teachers, even having the right to post their judgments about their teachers on a website.[4]

In '*Nietzsche and the Paradox of Postmodern education*', Liz Jackson reflects that this dual relationship between teaching and learning roles "cannot inform our continuous directing and mentoring our young people in the particular methods and approaches we choose despite their personal interests and ideas." With its contradictory effects, Liz Jackson states: 'a truly postmodern education dedicating itself to the flourishing of the individual in the face of hegemonic, conformist cultural and social forces would be precluded by the educator's authoritative relation to his or her pupil."[5]

---

[3] « On remplacerait ainsi le sens du savoir par l'intérêt qu'il possède, la valeur de ce savoir par les usages qu'on peut en avoir. » Dany-Robert Dufour, *Education, religions, raison et marché,* Diversité, 142

[4] «Elle s'impose comme une donnée, comme une réalité appartenant de facto à la dimension juridique de l'élève. L'autonomie comme pouvoir de se donner des règles » Ibid., 140

[5] Liz Jackson, *Nietzsche and the Paradox of Postmodern education*, Philosophical studies in education,

And Dany-Robert Dufour emphasizes that education needs purpose and conviction. He reiterates that postmodern education is, in general, lack of faith, lack of confidence between teacher and student. Education can't just offer the truth and value through relative vision and personal needs and interests. Especially, the thinking will stop functioning if the teaching lost its purpose, and if roles of educators are just as a companion or animator, the status of educator is lost.[6] The dual relationship fails to guide students without strong conviction in every domain. Finally, value, truth and significance will be rejected due to this absence of objectivity and otherness.[7]

In some Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan where postmodern education prevails as in Western countries, many teachers face serious and insurmountable challenges. They feel helpless to resist postmodern wave and don't know where its rationale comes from or how to change the situation. The Chinese tradition such as "respecting teacher and his teaching" is on the verge of disappearing. The following list represents the positive effects and negative effects of postmodern education:

Table 1: Positive effects and negative effects on postmodern education

Positive effects:	Negative effects :
Diversity of reference	Lack of rules and moral guide
Freedom of choice	Lack of faith and conviction
Creation by personal interest	Lack of public interest
Freedom of expression	Lack of respect for others
Tolerance toward differences	Increasing conquest
Respect for autonomy	Selfish behavior

Considering the negative influence of postmodernism on education and before studying the proposition about the new postmodern education, we propose a simple example that can help summarize why interdisciplinary thinking should be the prevailing idea. For example, in the diverse learning environment, a teacher offers a variety of chocolates to students, Student number 1 takes what the teacher told him or her to choose; the student number 2 just looks at them and says that they are all the same and does not want to taste them; the student number 3 only picks the one that pleases him. The student number 4 takes them all, saying that they all taste good despite their differences; the student number 5 chooses more than 2 or 3 chocolates with the best looking style and evaluates their quality after eating them.

38, (2007),7

[6] Dany-Robert Dufour, *Education, religions, raison et marché, Diversité,* 52-53

[7] « elle ne peut pas se donner un but, elle ne peut pas se borner à constater des différences et à se laisser porter par une vision relativiste des valeurs ou des vérités, ce qui reviendrait à renoncer aux valeurs et la vérité, c'est-à-dire, renoncer au sens ...» Ibid., 145

The student number 1 lives in the traditional way; the students number 2, 3, 4 are said to have freedom of choice in the postmodern education but their autonomy regarding accepting or rejecting arises from personal desire and relative thinking. In this way, postmodern education takes a risk by being a single-discipline approach because it is not determined by objectivity, but rather subjectivity and relativism. Especially for low achievers and less motivated students, they may become confused or frustrated by knowledge deprived of integrated learning. Postmodernism, in a diverse learning environment, gives out a false vision of multiple freedoms. In the process of learning, one should not be limited by personal desire and narrowed down by a subjective condition, but open to perceiving a balance between subjectivity and objectivity when seeking value, fact and truth. The example of the student number 5, after eating the chocolates he selected, is well prepared to use his experience to analytically test the knowledge he has acquired. She or he has utilized interdisciplinary thinking will perceive the issue or problem with critical analysis derived from cross-disciplines.

From the aforementioned perspectives about learning, the development of an understanding of interdisciplinary thinking is proposed as a resolution for shortcomings of postmodern education in this paper. While discipline-specific study is valuable and significant for students who are gaining specialized knowledge, intellectual maturation involves, this interdisciplinary thinking that is more complex and consistent with knowledge in education. In *Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes,* it is suggested that structural knowledge includes both declarative and procedural knowledge:

> "High levels of structural knowledge are associated with improved problem-solving and knowledge transfer skills and increased memory, retention, and comprehension of information […] Interdisciplinary learning fosters a problem-focused integration of information consistent with more complex knowledge structures...[and] convergence of disciplines on one relevant theme promotes intellectual maturation through the analysis, comparison, and contrast of perspectives contributed by each discipline."[8]

Postmodern education takes into account the notion of competence, which is related to dealing with the problems we face and fulfilling the needs of our living environments. It is associated with "improved problem-solving," but not with "problem-focus integration of information [which is] consistent with more complex knowledge structures." Anne Marie Droun-Hans indicates that language is the system of oppositions. The development of interdisciplinary thinking goes through times of consecutive contrast, comparison and differentiation in order to achieve more complex knowledge. Compared with postmodern education, the perspective of interdisciplinary thinking is conceptualized, because interdisciplinary learning does not ignore opposition,

---

[8] Lana Ivanitskaya, Deborah Clark, George Montgomery, and Ronald Primeau, *Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes,* Innovative Higher Education, 27 (2) (2002):100-101.

differentiation, conflicting situations and contrast of perspectives in integrated knowledge. The learners expect results of the integrated knowledge in interdisciplinary education. Specifically, declarative knowledge is an important element of the organization of conceptual knowledge that helps students "to determine when and how a set of declarative facts applies to a particular situation."[9] Without this knowledge, students cannot conduct a deeper analysis into the complexity of issues. Particularly, it will enhance students' abilities to assess the relationships among interdisciplinary perspectives and to broaden integrated knowledge as a whole. However, it is not accepted by many postmodernists. Likewise, declarative knowledge of exteriority and objectivity is also ignored.

Education is in need of conceptual reconstruction. According to *Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes,* declarative knowledge outcomes focus on "a personal recognition of the dual validity of objective and subjective means of reasoning—two aspects of cognition represented in interdisciplinary problem-solving."[10] Based on the interdisciplinary thinking which plays an important part in my own research and teaching, courses such as "Language and Culture," "Introduction to Literature" and my articles associating literature with tourism, culture and language learning, all branches of declarative knowledge are involved in interdisciplinary thinking. It is meant to "motivate students by enhancing their understanding of the material including the ability to recall facts in order to have the ability to apply newly learned facts to new situations."[11] Thus, the organization of knowledge develops metacognitive skills, critical thinking and "selection of thinking and problem-solving strategies and skills, as well as planning, monitoring, and valuation of thinking processes. (Blake and Spence, 1990)"[12] Finally, structural knowledge encourages students to consider this acquisition of knowledge as their own personal approaches. They can do problem solving better in their everyday life while acquiring knowledge and skills.

In addition to constructing integrated knowledge through interdisciplinary thinking, the role of teachers should be as the guide, instead of simply a companion or animator because all declarative knowledge should be planned and interpreted by teachers. Especially, the diversity of fact, theory or concept is taught by teachers in order to help know how issues are analyzed and constructed into a complex claim. Compared with the dual relation in postmodern thinking, the relationship between teachers and students is mutual in the classroom.

---

[9] Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery, and Primeau, *Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes*, 99.

[10] Ibid., 108.

[11] Michael P. Ryan, *Monitoring text comprehension: individual difference in epistemological standards*, Journal of Educational Psychology, 76 (1994): 248.

[12] Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery, and Primeau, *Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes*, 102

At the end of every semester, I will ask the students to intergrade what they have learned and report on it or make something creative in a cultural way, which is fostered in the integrated program with intercultural and interdisciplinary learning. For example, in contrast to the postmodern theory on metaphor, such as someone "forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can and live with any repose, security,"[13] *The Chinese, the English and the French proverbs in metaphorical construction* (Shu Nu Yang, 2012) represents not only multicultural context full of proverbs, but also interdisciplinary thinking and learning in cultural creation such as art, history, politics, culture, and literature. The purpose of this representation is not only to bring back some lost value of tradition, but equally to inspire students to find significant value and meaning in humanities during their lifetime.

Development of the humanities and educational program

At first, in light of many human errors and incompleteness made in the past from a single perspective approach, most conclusions in the twenty-first century cannot simply be made based on one or a few persons' stand points. It would not be a truth if we only sum up the phenomenon based on one or a few theories or ideas. According to pluralist theories, there may be more than one value that makes the proposition true. This relative theory does not resolve the problem if we need to go through difficulties or encounter danger along the path of inquiry. It "refers to the capacity to understand multiple viewpoints on a given topic including an appreciation of the differences between disciplines and their perspectives on how to approach a problem."[14] When ideas from different disciplines are taken into account, interactive discussion on an issue and its diversity of thought definitely helps make the answers more clear and affirmative.

Then, as interdisciplinary thinking "outcomes contribute to a personalized integration and assimilation of knowledge transferable to other contexts, issues, or problems,"[15] this structural complex knowledge is adaptable for other fields and domains, and it will be applied as an example program to examine postmodern thinking for current issues on humanities, especially in education. In this way, the following study will focus on the development of humanities and educational programs with interdisciplinary thinking. At first, declarative knowledge with cross-disciplines will be provided as a humanities resource, and then, critical thinking aided by the necessary analytical process will be brought to bear on current issues of humanities. Finally, we can get new significant outcomes from the interdisciplinary theory and method after acquiring

---

[13] Liz Jackson, *Nietzsche and the Paradox of Postmodern Education*, 52.

[14] Lynda Baloche, John Hynes, and Helen Berger, *Moving Toward the Integration of Professional and General Education.* Action in Teacher Education, 18(1) (1996): 3

[15] Ibid., 108

integrated knowledge. According to the proposition in *Interdisciplinary learning: Process and Outcomes*, the interdisciplinary learning is to lead to seek the truth and value:

> "For example, the interactions between the individual and societal norms can be explored in historical and political dimensions; analyzed philosophically; and expressed in literature, film, or visual art." And an author can "reveals religious meanings in literature leads to a more critical awareness of fundamental questions about truth and values."[16]

In this development of humanities and educational programs, the utilization of interdisciplinary thinking in new postmodern education draws on three sources: literary, philosophical and religious thinking (the theory and practice of plurality in the education for personality development from postmodern people to new postmodern people), as well as scientific, religious and cultural studies (the theory and practice of plurality in language, cultural education and teaching from singularity to universality), and development of interdisciplinary thinking in the education system. With interdisciplinary thinking, new postmodernism will be explored first in a literary dimension. At first, the writer, Julien Green, "reveals religious meanings in literature and leads to a more critical awareness of fundamental questions about truth and values." Then, spatial interactions in vision of humanities from near to far via multiple perceptions will be explored in cultural studies and science, designed to hopefully lead us to be universal people. These interdisciplinary studies will also lead to an education system which will be well-developed toward the new dimension and well able to take its place in the world.

1. From literary, philosophical and religious thinking: Theory and practice of plurality in education for personality development from postmodern people to new postmodern people.

In the past few decades, the field of modern literature has moved toward interdisciplinary research with a combination of multi-dimensional plurality. In this study, the proposition of plurality of thought between time, evilness, body and identity, is the essence of the works presented by the bilingual writer, Julien Green which serves as an example. In Green's novels, the multi-dimensional variable is fragmented time, in which the body becomes a decaying parasitic organism, and evilness is the cause and effect resulting from time and a decaying body. He describes how time and body are not everlastingly consistent, but progress towards evolution by discontinuous "instants," creative or destructive, and finally guided by the absolute truth.

The examples in Julien Green's novels are as follows:

> *(1)   Si J'étais Vous* : The young man, Fabien, unsatisfied with his present

---

[16] Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery, and Primeau, *Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes*, 101.

condition as a junior clerk, made a deal with the devil for changing the bodies to whoever he wanted them to be. He failed with only an innocent boy left as a result. After many changes of personalities, he knew that he had more troubles with the new body and he finally longed desperately for his old self and went to find his original body in peace. From this novel, the conquest and transgression do not always lead us to everlasting happiness. The plurality of body and time cannot keep their wholeness but destroy human existence.

(2) *Varouna*: This story is kind of a tragedy in reincarnation. In ancient time, a young boy called Oël found a treasure on a beach. It was a necklace that brought love to him with tragedy in his first life and second life. During his third life, his lover, Jeanne, discovered all the mistakes they had made in the past lives. This awakening to the truth puts an end to the cycle of misery. With a wooden cross, symbol of faith, they finally finished this repeated tragedy forever. This story demonstrates that discontinuous instants could be creative or destructive, and that the plurality of body and time cannot resolve fundamental problems of human existence.

(3) *Mont-Cinère, Adrienne Mesurat:* The Young Girl, Emilie, did not get along with her mother who was too parsimonious to her. The family conflict is ended by the fire set by Emilie. And Adrienne Mesurat pushes her father to his death because of his ruthlessness toward her. The loss of love, sharing and the refusal to accept morality lead to both the family's and society's failure.

(4) *L'Autre, Epaves:* The young man called Roger often lived with sexual pleasure, but ultimately fell in love with one innocent girl called Karin. During WWII, after the concentration camp disaster started, he was inspired by two old pious women in a small church of village. This episode changed his life. Karin also changed her life after he left for France. Seduced and abandoned, morally depressed, Karin ended up sleeping with the conquering German soldiers, and thus is shunned by the silence of her native Copenhagen. After the War, she eventually became the enemy for all citizens in the city. However, when Roger returned to visit her, he himself had become almost priest like and persuaded her to repent her sin. Then he disappeared from her life again. She felt pain for her impossible love and struggled between physical and spiritual life. Finally, she found the salvation in spiritual love which is beyond time.

Philippe in *Epaves* was a wealthy businessman living in Paris, who only cared about his body for physical reason, for example: how to lose weight. One day when he felt too cowardly to save one woman along the Seine, so he began to think about the lost meaning of his bourgeois life. The issues in these two novels, *L'Autre, Epave,* relate to body and time and make us consider the significance of modern urban life.

The characters of Green's novels are involved with egocentrism, body

objectification and their increasing desire to conquest, and tend to lack spiritual and creative lives and, nevertheless, refuse auto-limitation and acceptance of morality. The complexity of issues presented simply cannot be treated only through the lens of one single discipline, such as psychology or philosophy. Likewise, modern human life symptoms that are caused by different types of infections should be treated in different ways.

These issues in Green's novels, such as plurality of time, evilness, and body, are related to the critical, analytical and interdisciplinary thinking in postmodernism. The theoretical basis is grounded on the pertinent theories involving a number of contemporary and representative French scholars, such as Paul Ricoeur, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Andre Le Breton. Their works are interpreted in this paper with regard to cross-disciplines such as their symbols of evilness, rising tide of insignificance, body philosophy, and pertinent religious perspectives. For example, when Nietzsche's philosophy gave birth to postmodernism, he proclaimed, "we seek out the pleasant life-preserving consequences of truth" over 'knowledge which has no consequences' or 'truths which are possibly harmful and destructive.'"[17] And he denied "that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted." He did not agree "that many actions called moral ought to be done and encouraged." Criticism comes from other scholars such as Cornelius Castoriadis who stated that a society where people refuse auto-limitation and acceptance of morality has already failed. The refusal of these two social significances constitutes the modern world where expansion without limit is in crisis.[18] And David Le Breton said that separation between "I" and "body" has become a serious problem in modern life.[19] If the present life-preserving consequences are the truth, lack of otherness, the personal relationship with others, like the world, nature or even with our body treated as an object, is disconnected.

Considering the serious problems prevailing in our younger generation today, such as drugs, violence, egocentricity, and body objectification, which are correlated with the rising tide of these two insignificances: refusal of auto-limitation and morality, we are surely obliged to re-examine the issues of postmodernism. These can be correlated with many different segments and subjects, such as humanism, individualism, consumerism, and relative theories, as well as the critical theories about socio-historical meaning and the meaning of absolute truth, according to Anne-Marie Droun-Hans.[20]

---

[17] Liz Jackson, *Nietzsche and the Paradox of Postmodern Education*, 8.

[18] « Mais une société qui refuse l'autolimitation et l'acceptation de la moralité est vouée à l'échec. Des deux grandes significations constitutives du monde moderne - l'expansion illimitée - est aujourd'hui en crise. » Cornelius Castoriadis, *La montée de l'insignifiance* (Paris. Seuil, 1996), 192

[19] « Dans l'univers biblique l'homme est un corps et son corps n'est pas autre chose que lui-même. » David Le Breton, *Anthropologie du Corps et Mondernité* (Paris: P.U.F., 1990), 18.

[20] « A ne plus aider à faire la distinction entre sentiment spontané et recherche de la vérité, entre subjectivité et objectivité ? » And « (...) D'où l'inutilité de distinguer le vrai et le bon, le bon et le bien,

Inspired by Green's literary world, this paper concludes our proposal with a claim of new postmodernism. It is involved with an educative purpose in personality development, with which the author proposes the coherence between 'be' and 'have', and 'I' and 'we'; Green draws multi-dimensional lines through the characters in his literary works in order to bring about introspection on changing our lives, which is the ultimate purpose of the study. As we believe all research about socio-historical meaning, universal value, wholeness of body and morality guided by absolute truth should be brought back into our educational system, especially in the humanities. Through interdisciplinary thinking, our perception will go beyond a tunnel vision and enable us to see differences with mutual understanding.

(2) From scientific, religious & cultural studies: Theory and practice of the plurality in language, cultural education and teaching from singularity to universality.

With regard to the concept of delayed socio-cultural ways of thinking, it continues to cause more conflict in the world and our society's ways of thinking. In other words, they are sometimes far behind the changing pace of the new age. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to re-examine the blinkered way of thinking with a view to building universal values in education.

Coming into the first decade of the twenty-first century, undoubtedly, we are being confronted with an ever-changing, complicated and diverse era. People are trying to learn about and understand their own lives as defined by their cultures, identities and ways of thinking. In order to achieve this, our understanding should be based on the previously acquired knowledge and values that may remain consistent with the new, but intertwined, time. "Culture," for example, has diversified significantly from its traditional meaning and developed multiple definitions and perspectives. Thus, any segment related to the critical thinking of postmodernism would be included in the domain as part of an ongoing cultural phenomenon.

Therefore, this study suggests another perspective when examining multiple identities and globally integrated values derived from cultural studies and scientific discoveries. This chapter will consist of two parts as follows:

a. From anthropological, cultural studies:

According to Lévi-Strauss: "When the travel begins, gradually, the near distance is far away from us and the far is near us."[21] This visual perspective is all about progress

---

qui ne sont jamais que relatifs à nos propres subjectivités. » Anne-Marie Droun-Hans, *Penser la 'Post-postmodernité' Que nous reste-t-il des Lumières ?* (Penser l'Education, Philisophie de l'Education et Histoire des Idées pédagogiques, (2005), 53.
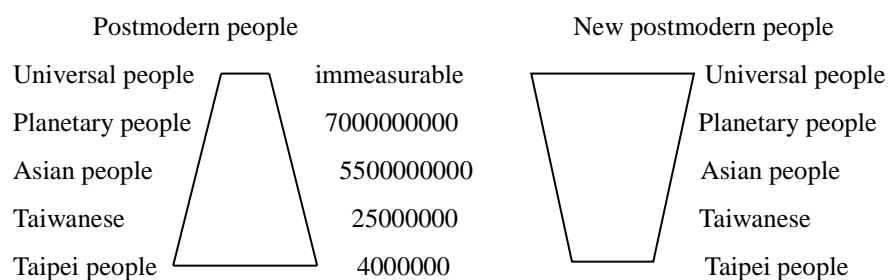
[21] «Quand le voyage commence et, au fur et à mesure qu'il progresse, le proche s'éloigne et le lointain se rapproche. » Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'Invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 40.

from the notion of perception between proximity and far distance in time and space. If we adjust our vision, which cannot be conditioned by one angle, we will ignore the distance and difference before us. Such multi-spaced and multi-timed exploration will lead us to multi-culture and diverse identities. Also, the universal meaning will be, thus, established by visual interaction and cross-relationships with mutual respect, according to the theory of Merleau-Ponty.

      b. From scientific, religious studies :

Drouin-Hans in her article *Diversité ou Identité Quel Idéal pour l'Education ? Opposition ou Convergence* said that the identities shall include unity and globality. With new scientific discovery, such as the Big Bang Theory, D.N.A., dark matter and dark energy supporting the whole universe, human beings scientifically find our universal position and identities in this unity. In the fourth century, Saint Augustine foretold of the existence of dark matter and dark energy according to the Bible in his *Confessions*. Recently, *Rare Earth, Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe* (2000), a book by Peter Ward, shows the unique existence of the earth in the universe. This will lead us to think that if we are alone in the universe, and God has his plan for us in *The Creator and the Cosmos* (Ross, 2001)? Then, 'I' with a meaning of divine creation shall coexist with a socio-historical meaning of "we". And when we take to look at Earth from outer space, we would become aware of the unique place every country and its culture occupy. In this way, egocentrism and authoritarianism would be avoided through considering the unique creation of the earth and human beings. The following figure represents the comparison between postmodern and new postmodern.

Figure 1: The comparison between postmodern and new postmodern people[22]

Postmodern people		New postmodern people
Universal people	immeasurable	Universal people
Planetary people	7000000000	Planetary people
Asian people	5500000000	Asian people
Taiwanese	25000000	Taiwanese
Taipei people	4000000	Taipei people

The diagram on the left indicates the number of people who do not relate to people's identities in space. It seems that the universal people appear to possess more identities but do not occupy much of space that could be reserved for the elites. However,

---

[22] Shu Nu Yang, *La Pluralité dans l'Etude Pluriculturelle.*Acts du colloque international "Au-delà de la France, l'Europe : enseigner et transmettre une culture européenne" (Taipei : Fu-Jen University, 2012) 313

the image on the right is contrary to the image on the left, demonstrating that the universal people occupy more space and appear to have more identities. Thus, people in the new postmodern world perceive themselves as having a diverse range of identities as well as a global vision for all the people on the planet.

It is hoped that the singular way of perception will no longer be a hurdle to the intercultural communication of human beings when 'I' coexist with 'we' and 'we' have diverse identities ranging, for example, the identities from Taiwanese people to universal people. Ultimately, the multiple perspectives of our universal mentality and knowledge will easily merge into our cultural and educational identities.

As a whole, this research aims to promote multiple perceptions and universal values in the new era that is constantly evolving from singularity to universality as is based on the development of theories by several authors, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others scientists. Regarding the association between theories and practices, singular thinking would not become an obstacle in human communication.

Development of interdisciplinary thinking in the education system:

Based on the aforementioned studies, an interdisciplinary thinking approach can probably lead us to new postmodern education. The new approach includes course designs, teaching evaluation, personnel recruitment and teaching training. For example, colleges could organize interdisciplinary committees or trainings in order to help broaden students' minds as well as teachers' ways of thinking, and enhance their understanding or personality vis-à-vis other people and other fields involved.

The examples are shown in the following teaching Program:

(1) Course designs: In the domains of humanities and educational programs, interdisciplinary thinking courses, such as literature in cultural studies, animal protection in children's literature, language learning in scientific discovery etc., will be integrated into different disciplines. These courses and activities are designed to help enrich knowledge and enhance the understanding of our world in which we live today.

(2) Teaching evaluation: Based on the mutual relationship in classrooms, it is crucial that teaching evaluation should be preceded by communicative understanding. Students cannot be both a player and a coach in the classroom. Their plural roles in classrooms could make the educational purpose hard to fulfill if they are not clear and organized. Therefore, it would be problematic for teachers to take so much criticism from irresponsible student who cannot play a leading role and might bring negative influence on learning or teaching. The goal of pedagogical assessment is designed to help students understand their roles when learning with more

knowledgeable and significant others. Furthermore, students shall be divided into 3 levels: high, medium and low achievers. Only the high achievers can evaluate teaching; the medium achievers shall reply to questions; and the low-achieving students write down notes regarding the process of their improvement for learning. We believe this evaluation is determinative for students' and teachers' careers in the future.

(3)   Teaching training: The determinative role in interdisciplinary thinking is the teacher. The interdisciplinary training is significantly necessary for those who teach the interdisciplinary classes. Thus, this kind of training includes forums, researches, teaching skills or teaching camps. After teaching training, making plans for further cooperation is a necessary task. The purpose of the educational program is to help more students develop the diversity of their identities and the universal values necessary for them to participate in the new postmodern society.

(4)   Educational system plan

Personnel recruitment: Organizations are to recruit staff and teachers who have necessary backgrounds or training. However, these people are different from the staff in the traditional general study center. Their thinking or experience could offer services to enact policies and facilitate teaching and learning. They can form one team to coordinate with those who are from different fields. The integrated team can provide support for students and teachers as a consulting service for mutual support.

(5)   Committee   or   information   center: After   preparing   all interdisciplinary programs in personnel resources, an official committee or information center could be established for conducting the project while holding related activities. The center is associated with all disciplines in the educational organization and brings them all together into discussion, negotiation, cooperation and finding solutions.

Finally, the following list compares between postmodern and interdisciplinary outcomes:

Table 2: Comparison between postmodern and interdisciplinary learning outcomes

Postmodern outcomes	Interdisciplinary outcomes
Focus on a relevant discipline	Having more relevant features
Not integrating relevant disciplines	Integrating relevant disciplines
Logical and fragmented	Conceptual and consistent
Focus on personal interest	Focus on declarative knowledge
Notion of relative knowledge	Notion of absolute knowledge
Dual relationship in classroom	Mutual relationship in classroom
Relative thinking	Critical thinking skills
Based on notion of competence	Based on procedural knowledge
Distracted by diversity of opir and knowledge	Having structural knowledge

As a result, when interdisciplinary outcomes are integrated into humanities and educational programs, educators transfer not only cross-disciplinary knowledge to other contexts or areas of study, but also help our next generation develop their values. In this way, the creation of new postmodern people through interdisciplinary thinking can be taken account. The next table will indicate the characteristics of new postmodern people compared to postmodern people:

Table 3: Characteristics of new postmodern people compared to postmodern people:

Postmodern People	New Postmodern People
Perception of near distance	Multi-perception from near to far distance
Having limiting identities	Having diversity of identities
Focus on individual singularity	Focus on universality
Refusal of auto-limitation	Coherence between 'be' and 'have'
Refusal of acceptance of morality	Guided by absolute knowledge
Objectification of body	Coherence between 'I' and 'body'
Increasing conquest	Estimating otherness
Dual relationship with others	Mutual relationship with others
Determined by subjectivity	Balance between subjectivity and objectivity
Unconventional thinking, but lac conviction and faith	Unconventional thinking, but with conviction and faith.

In order to create new postmodern people through this interdisciplinary thinking

and learning, it will be necessary to include the addition of more humanities subjects in educational programs. The achievement of such an aim is clearly feasible, functional and pragmatic within our education environments. With the many dedicated contributions now being made in this area, making an effort to accomplish this kind of programs will be a primary goal of this mission.

Conclusion

Education is like a building. It shall be kept in good condition with strong structure. Far example, when the last beam is posed, we need to pour the concrete into the steel beam frames so that the whole building will solidify and stand for a long time. Higher education is like concrete structure in which primary and secondary education is framed by a steel skeleton construction. As this new educational building needs the new architectural element, according to our study, interdisciplinary thinking in this building could be a better and more powerful substantial material for the supporting columns of higher education instead of current postmodern education. It helps to restructure its inner system and add more social functions for the world. The new postmodernist approach and design is necessary to create new ways of thinking and various values. Overall, we believe this is a new approach to education that will improve teaching and learning for a better life in the future. We, the educators, and they, the students, all should take responsibility to help develop the new structures of higher education.

References

Alain, P. La vie scolaire, pour un élève autonome et responsable, Les cahiers d'éducation & devenir, 2, (2009)

Baloche, L., Hynes, J. & Berger H. Moving toward integration of professional and general education. Action in Teacher Education 18(1) ,(1996)

Blakey, E., & Spence, S. Developing Metacognition. (Report N. EDO-IR-90-6). Washington DC.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed327118) (1990)

Castoriadis, C. La Montée de l'Insignifiance. Paris : Seuil, 1996.

Dany-Robert, D., Education, religions, raison et marché, Diversité. Diversité,Ville-Ecole-Intégration, (2005)

Droun-Hans, A-M. nser la 'Post-postmodernité' Que nous reste-t-il des Lumières ?, Penser l'Education, Philisophie de l'Education et Histoire des Idées pédagogiques, (2005)

Green, A. Education, Globalization, and Nation State. London : Macmillan, 1997

Green, J. Oeuvres Complètes. Paris : Gallimard, 1977

Ivanitskaya, L., Clark D., Montgomery, G., and Primeau R., Interdisciplinary Learning : Process and Outcomes. Innovative Higher Education, 27 (2) (2002)

Le Breton, A. Anthropologie du Corps et Modernité. Paris : P.U.F., 1990

Lévi-Strauss, C. De Près et de Loin. Paris : Odile Jacob, 2001

Merleau-Ponty, M. Le visible et l'Invisible. Paris : Gallimard, 1964

Liz, J. Nietzsche and the Paradox of Postmodern education. Philosophical studies in education, 38,
(2007)

Keiko, H. Bachelard's Theory of Time : Missing Link Between Science and Art. Aesthetics,13, (2009)

Ross, Hugh. The Creator and the Cosmos. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993, 2nd ed. 1995, 3rd ed.
(2001)

Ryan, M. P. Monitoring text comprehension: individual difference in epistemological standards. Journal
of Educational Psychology, 76, (1994)

Saint Augustin. Les Confessions. Paris: Flammarion, 1993

Smith, A. The Wealth of Nations. Florida : Simon & Brown, 2012

Ward, P. Rare Earth, Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe. New York : Copernicus, 2000

Waks. Leonard, J. Globalization, state transformation, and educational re-structuring: why postmodern
diversity will prevail over standardization. Studies in Philosophy and Education, 25, (2006)

Yang, S. N. The Chinese, the English and the French proverbs in metaphorical construction. Miaoli:
101, 2012

------------- La Pluralité dans l'Etude Pluriculturelle. Acts du colloque international "Au-delà de la
France, l'Europe : enseigner et transmettre une culture européenne", Fu-Jen University, Taipei

Pedagogy in Action, Why teach with an interdisciplinary thinking ?
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:2RZsoTfC7vIJ:serc.carleton.edu/sp/li
brary/interdi course designs, teaching evaluation, personnel recruitment and teaching
training.sciplinary/why.html+Baloche,+Hynes,+and+Berger+1996)&cd=2&hl=zh-TW&ct=cl
nk&gl=tw